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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR FEBRUARY 03, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for February 03, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

HURRIYET: Turkish-American Association (TAA) Executive Board in Adana extended thanks to the Adana Governor Mr. Cahit Kirac, the American Consul Mr. Scott Reid, the Adana Security Director Mr. Mehmet Cebe, and the State Hospital Emergency Team for the close interest and sensitivity they showed during the distressing January 30 attack (see press summary 01/31) at their association, through an announcement published on Hurriyet daily. The announcement further read that TAA, as an NGO, has been giving English classes in Adana for over fifty years and the association was a voluntary establishment that provided non-profit English classes under the control of the Ministry of National Education, and all of its material and institutional assets belonged to Turkish people and town. TAA will reportedly resume classes as of Saturday, February 4.

ZAMAN: The daily reported that the parliamentary commission for the Semdinli Case has obtained significant evidence concerning the "local sources" of the incident as the commission heard statements from Kutlu Savas, former Inspection Board Chairperson of the Prime Minister Office (see press summary 02/02), and Sabri Uzun, Chairperson of the Security Directorate's Intelligence Center, yesterday. According to anonymous member of the commission, the Semdinli incident's origins are traced back to the Jandarma, however, the incident was of local nature. The commission decided to hear the statements of some local public employees in Hakkari.

EVRENSEL: Tunceli Mayor Songul Erol Abdil will participate in "Inter-governmental Relationships-International Visitors and Leaders Program" that will be held in the U.S. between February 6-24. The program, which will last 18 days will cover the following topics: Federal Structure of the U.S. Government, How Do Local and State Administrations Work in the U.S., Role of the Non-Governmental Organizations in Supporting Local Administrations, Financing of the Municipalities and Local Tax Administration, Relationship of the U.S. and Turkey, and the U.S.'s Turkey Policies."

HURRIYET: Prof. Yucel Askin, Van Centennial University Rector, paid separate visits to the DYP (True Path Party) leader Mehmet Agar and SHP (Social Democratic People's Party) leader Murat Karayalcin. Agar reportedly said that case of Askin should not have gone beyond the framework of the judiciary.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Some of the students of the Dicle University are allegedly being threatened and oppressed by the police. The daily noted that students have reportedly suffered from investigations to date. Following tension developing in the (southeastern) region after the Semdinli incident, incidents of students being threatened by the police reportedly surged.

EVRENSEL: The daily draws attention to the fact that Turkish Parliamentary Commission Probing the Semdinli Case, which was set up in November 23, 2005 and which has heard in a total of 11 sessions the statements of the lawmakers, military officers and police officers for over two months, have not been enumerated or mentioned in the public website of the Turkish Parliament. The other commissions of the parliament were however cited on the website, according to the daily.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Yilmaz Yasmin, a person living in Agri's Dogubeyazit district, claimed that JITEM (Jandarma Intelligence Center) members came to his house and forcibly took Yasmin to their van, which was allegedly full of arms and heavy weapons, and was forced to become an agent by reported JITEM members. Moreover, when Yasmin went to Dogubeyazit Prosecutor's Office to file a complaint following that incident, the prosecutor allegedly said that an investigation would be started against him, if Yasmin told this story to the media.

EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: A court of first instance has been convened in Diyarbakir to litigate KURD-DER (Kurdish Association for Democracy and Solidarity) members on charges of holding a "Mahabad Kurdish Republic and Commemoration of the Executed Kurdish Leaders" conference on April 3. The court ordered that conference CDs in Kurdish be translated. Ibrahim Guclu, Spokesperson of KURD-DER, one of the defendants of the court, demanded that a Kurdish translator be assigned to the court for

he would be giving his statement in Kurdish.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Reportedly, hunger strikes protesting prison conditions of Abdullah Ocalan have been getting widespread in the southeastern region. New rolling hunger strikes in Mardin's prison and in Ergani and Bismil districts of Diyarbakir have been started. Havva Keser, Abdullah Ocalan's sister, has also taken turns fasting at the second day of the two-day rolling hunger strike launched in Adana's Human Rights Association. 100 people in Mahmur Camp in Iraq have also launched a hunger strike. The hunger strike that was started in Sirnak's Cizre district has been ended and nearly 1000 people held a demonstration to mark that. A small turmoil broke out when people engaged in a petty scuffle with police. Meanwhile, a group of people paid a visit to the Cizre Mayor who has been fined to pay 10.000 YTL (approximately 7,500 USD).

OZGUR GUNDEM: Turkish Armed Forces have been continuing its military operations in rural area of Mardin and are readying to launch new operations in Sirnak.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Following police's intervention in a public demonstration that marked the end of a hunger strike in Mus yesterday, and, police allegedly wounding four people as they tried to quell it, reportedly, non-governmental organizations in Mus demanded that the Mus Security Director be removed from his office.

BOLGE / OZGUR GUNDEM: Aziz Akgul, Chairperson of MADER (Mersin Fuel Oil Association), said that 34 Turkish firms have not been able to receive payment of a total of 1 billion dollars worth of service firms provided through transportation of fuel oil to Iraq, a situation which has caused halting of transportation operations to from Turkey to Iraq for fifteen days. Akgul further said that if the problem persisted, 24,000 people earning livelihood from the business will lose their job and 12,000 tanker trucks turn idle.

EVRENSEL: The daily approached critically to the recent CHP support extended (see press summary 01/30) to the Tekel Cigarette Factory workers who have been on a strike for a while against the government decision to close down the factory. Following recent announcement of CHP deputies that they would extend support to businessmen in Adana if the Privatization Authority decided to privatize the factory rather than closing it down (see press summary 02/02), the daily expressed the anger of the workers who discerned CHP's "true face." Meanwhile, DISK (Confederation of Progressive Unions) Chairperson, who paid a visit to the Tekel Adana cigarette factory workers on strike in the factory for 35 days, called on the workers' platform to go on a one-hour strike in the workday to protest the government which "has been observing the instructions of the IMF."

EVRENSEL: The draft report of the Turkish Parliamentary Commission for Probing Honor Killings reportedly stated that majority of women in the southeastern region was speaking Kurdish and did not know Turkish; a fact that reportedly made it harder to extend support for women in the region. Nebahat Akkoc, representative of KA-MER women's association, suggested broadcasting of Kurdish educational programs in the state-run Turkish TV station in order to increase women's awareness in the region about their own rights, according to the report.

HURRIYET ONLINE: Two avalanches took place on the 80th kilometer of the road between Hakkari and Sirnak. Road clearing team and 24 cars with 40 passengers were trapped in-betweens two avalanche spots. Jandarma and villagers rescued this morning the people and team members trapped.

WWW.MEMLEKETHABER.COM: A former governor (of an unspecified province) reportedly said that the government has been trying to cure cancer with vitamins. In fact, the surrender of (Abdullah) Ocalan was only part of a plot. Ocalan is a terrorist in whom the U.S. has made investments for so many years, Ocalan is a murderer, said the news article. Since the U.S. anticipated then that it would lose control of Ocalan, (it determined that) Ocalan's life would be in jeopardy because of a couple of varying reasons. Not to render those investments it (the U.S.) made as futile, it determined that the wisest solution would be to guarantee the survival of Ocalan. The U.S. ensured this by surrendering Ocalan to Turkey. As a result of that, the (PKK terrorist) organization, which was formerly engaging in activities such as conducting raids on villages and (police/jandarma) stations, established greater goals. The organization developed strategies in the form of mass uprisings and rebellions in order to free that territory from Turkey's control. It carried out rehearsals of this project in Semdinli, Yuksekova and Batman. And it (it is not clear in the text whether the subject refers to the U.S. or to the terrorist organization) now waits and sees how the outcome would be.

REID